

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 8763

FOL TEL FM GUAYAQUIL ACT QUITO OF 09 DEC 74 REPTED YOUR INFO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUAYAQUIL 1404

FOR POL - MR. SHAW

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PGOV, PINT

SUBJ: MILITARY GOVERNOR OF GUAYAS PROVINCE TO BE REPLACED

REF: GUAYAQUIL 1396

1. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT THAT MILITARY GOVERNOR OF GUAYAS, ADM. RENAN OLMEDO GONZALEZ, APPOINTED TO INTER AMERICAN DEFENSE BOARD HAS PRODUCED MIXED, LOW-KEY REACTION IN GUAYAQUIL. COMMENTS FALL INTO THREE GENERAL CATEGORIES: A) OLMEDO'S EFFECTIVENESS AS GOVERNOR; B) REASONS FOR TRANSFER; C) SIGNIFICANCE OF TRANSFER.

2. OLMEDO HAS HELD OFFICE SINCE FEBRUARY 1972 AND IT GENERALLY AGREED THAT HIS PERFORMANCE IN THIS DEMANDING JOB HAS BEEN EXCELLENT. GUAYAQUIL ALWAYS PRESENTS POTENTIALLY VOLATILE SITUATION WITH ITS ARMY OF URBAN POOR AND TURBULENT STUDENT POLITICS. OLMEDO HAS MAINTAINED AN ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE AND STABILITY WITHOUT PROVOKING A CONFRONTATION AND SEVERAL HERE HAVE DESCRIBED HIS HANDLING OF THIS DELICATE SITUATION AS MASTERFUL THE OUTGOING GOVERNOR HAS NOT ALIGNED HIMSELF WITH ANY OF THE LOCAL POWER GROUPS BUT HAS

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REMAINED ON GOOD TERMS WITH PRACTICALLY ALL. TO HAVE GOVERNED

ALMOST 3 YEARS WITHOUT SERIOUSLY ANTAGONIZING ANY POTENT FACTION OF THE HIGHLY POLITICIZED GUAYAQUIL SOCIETY IS AN IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENT. OLMEDO HAS GROWN IN STATURE DURING TERM AS GOVERNOR AND ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT REGARDED WITH GREAT AFFECTION NOR HAS HE DEVELOPED A VOCAL BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT, HE IS RESPECTED FOR HIS FAIRNESS AND HIS ABILITY, AND HIS DEPARTURE IS VIEWED WITH REGRET IN MOST QUARTERS.

3. NOT ALL, HOWEVER, SEE OLMEDO'S TRANSFER AS A REASON FOR SORROW. IN SPECULATING ON REASONS FOR HIS TRANSFER SOME CLAIM THAT IT IS MERELY DELAYED REACTION BY GOE TO SPATE OF RUMORS THAT SWEPT GUAYAQUIL 6 MONTHS AGO CONCERNING GOVERNOR'S PECADILLOS WITH OFFICIAL FUNDS (GUAYAQUIL 582 AND 636). OLMEDO IS ALSO NOTORIOUS WOMANIZER BUT THIS KIND OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY VIEWED WITH TOLERANT ATTITUDE IN GUAYAQUIL AND IT DOUBTFUL THAT GOVERNOR'S POSSIBLE QUESTIONABLE ACTIVITIES WITH FINANCES OR FEMALES CONSTITUTE MAJOR FACTOR IN TERMINATION HIS TOUR IN GUAYAS. MOST GUAYAQUIL OBSERVERS CONTEMPLATING REASONS FOR TRANSFER EITHER ACCEPT IT AS ROUTINE CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN LINE WITH SERIES OF MILITARY REASSIGNMENTS OR AS MOVE BY PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ LARA TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POWER AND THAT OF ARMY ON NATIONAL SCENE.

4. REGARDLESS OF SPECIFIC MOTIVATION FOR ENDING OLMEDO'S TERM AS GOVERNOR, MOST AGREE THAT MOVE SIGNIFIES MARKED DECLINE IN GOVERNOR'S PERSONAL FORTUNES AND IN NAVY'S INFLUENCE WITHIN ADMINISTRATION. FOR OLMEDO HIMSELF, ASSIGNMENT TO WASHINGTON SEEN AS STEPPING STONE TO OBLIVION. GOVERNORSHIP OF GUAYAS REGARDED HERE AS SECOND ONLY TO PRESIDENCY AS MAJOR EXECUTIVE POSITION IN NATION AND OLMEDO'S MOVE FROM THIS FOCUS OF POWER TO INTER AMERICAN DEFENSE BOARD IS SEEN AS COME-DOWN OF CONSIDERABLE MAGNITUDE. (FYI: OLMEDO'S WIFE IS APPLICANT FOR U.S. RESIDENT VISA WITH PRIORITY DATE THAT WILL PROBABLY MAKE HER ELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT IN MAY 1975. GOVERNOR CALLED CONGEN ABOUT STATUS THIS VISA CASE APPLICATION LAST MONTH AND MAY BE CONTEMPLATING LEGALIZING U.S. RESIDENCE FOR HIMSLEF TO BE EFFECTIVE ON COMPLETION OF UPCOMING U.S. ASSIGNMENT.) PREVIOUS SPECULATION IN GUAYAQUIL HAD PREDICTED IMPORTANT NATIONAL POST FOR OLMEDO SUCH AS MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES OR AS REPLACEMENT FOR LONG-STANDING RIVAL MINGOVERMENT POVEDA. FAILURE TO RECEIVE SUCH A POSTING MARKS DEFINITE ECLIPS OF OLMEDO'S CAREER.

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5. GUAYAQUIL SOURCES VIEW OLMEDO'S TRANSFER AND PROBABLE REPLACEMENT BY GENERAL JAIME EDUARDO SEMBLANTES POLANCO, PRESENT CHIEF OF SECOND MILITARY ZONE WITH HEADQUARTERS IN GUAYAQUIL, EVIDENCE OF PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ LARA'S CONSOLIDATION OF POWER IN HIS OWN HAND AND INCREASE IN RELIANCE ON ARMY POWER BASE AT EXPENSE OF NAVY. ONLY REMAINING NAVAL OFFICER IN NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN KEY POSITION AND POSSESSING SOME INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION IS MINGOV POVEDA. IN SHORT TIME NAVY HAS SEEN POWERFUL JARRIN TRANSFERRED TO

FROM MINNATURAL RESOURCES TO LONDON AND OLMEDO TRANSFERRED TO WASHINGTON. NEW MINNATURAL RESOURCES IS REGARDED HERE AS NAVAL OFFICER WHO WILL DANCE CAREFULLY TO PRESIDENT'S TUNE AND NEW GOVERNOR OF GUAYAS WILL PROBABLY BE ABLE AND RESOURCEFUL ARMY GENERAL WHOSE CAREER IS ON THE RISE. IN JUNE 1974, WHEN SEARCH ON FOR NEW GOVERNOR OF MANABI, SOURCES REPORTED THAT NAVY EXERTING PRESSURE TO HAVE SOMEONE FROM ITS RANKS NAMED TO GOVERNORSHIP OF COAST'S SECOND MOST IMPORTANT PROVINCE. WHEN ARMY LT. COL. ANIBAL ZUMARRAGA WAS NOMINATED FOR THIS POSITION IT WAS REGARDED AS SET-BACK FOR NAVY'S ASPIRATIONS. COMBINING THIS ASSIGNMENT WITH JARRIN'S TRANSFER (AND "TAME" SUCCESSOR) AND OLMEDO'S REPLACEMENT BY AN ARMY GENERAL, THE VIEW FROM GUAYAQUIL SEES THE NAVY DEMOTED TO A MARKEDLY SUBORDINATE ROLE TO THE ARMY IN THE RODRIGUEZ LARA ADMINISTRATION.

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